

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT  
DISTRICT OF NEVADA

\* \* \*

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA,	)	
	)	
Plaintiff,	)	CR-S-98-139-PMP
	)	CR-S-98-473-PMP
v.	)	
	)	
WAYNE McMINIMENT,	)	<u>O R D E R</u>
	)	
Defendant.	)	
	)	

Presently before the Court is Wayne Andre McMiniment's Motion Pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 2255 to Vacate, Set Aside or Correct Sentence by a Person in Federal Custody ("Mot. to Vacate") (Doc. #41), filed on March 10, 2006. The Government filed Government's Opposition to Defendant's Motion Pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 2255 to Vacate, Set Aside, or Correct Sentence by a Person in Federal Custody ("Opp'n") (Doc. #45) on May 18, 2006. McMiniment filed a Reply (Doc. #49) on June 16, 2006.

Following several stipulated continuances to enable counsel for Defendant McMiniment to explore the grounds for Habeas relief further, Defendant filed a supplement to his motion (Doc. #61) on February 2, 2007. That supplement has been fully briefed and on March 1, 2007, the Court conducted a hearing regarding Defendant's motion.

I. FACTS

On December 23, 1998, McMiniment appeared before this Court and entered a plea of guilty to two felony counts of wire fraud in 2:98-CR-00473, and one misdemeanor count of willful failure to pay child support in 2:98-CR-00139. (Opp'n, Att. A at 4-5.) On January 20, 2000, this Court sentenced McMiniment to fifty-months imprisonment,

1 followed by a three year term of supervised release.<sup>1</sup> (Mot. to Vacate, Ex. 3.) The Court  
 2 ordered McMiniment to pay \$2,041,637 in restitution for the wire fraud counts and \$35,216  
 3 for the child support charges. (Opp'n, Att. A at 24.)

4 The charge of wilful failure to pay child support resulted from McMiniment's  
 5 failure to continue to pay interest on a criminal judgment and conviction in the Superior  
 6 Court of California for McMiniment's failure to meet his child support obligations.<sup>2</sup> (Id. at  
 7 13.) On March 25, 1991, the Superior Court of California adjudicated McMiniment guilty  
 8 and convicted him of failure to provide (child support) after adjudication. (Pre-Sentence  
 9 Investigation Report ¶ 53.) The California court terminated McMiniment's probation for  
 10 the charge on July 24, 1996 when he paid the principal amount in full, however, he still  
 11 owed interest on the principal. (Id.)

12 At the sentencing hearing, McMiniment's counsel objected to the Pre-Sentence  
 13 Report's categorization of McMiniment's criminal history as a Category III, arguing the  
 14 federal charge was based on McMiniment's failure to pay interest on the amount he owed in  
 15 the California case and so the charges were for the same conduct:

16 MR. CREMEN: . . . the offense in California that is referenced in  
 17

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18  
 19 <sup>1</sup> The sentence as to Count 1 of 2:98-CR-00473 was twenty-six months, and the sentence as  
 20 to Count 2 was twenty-six months – consecutive to Count 1, for a total of fifty-two months  
 21 imprisonment, followed by three years of supervised release for the two counts. For Count 1 of 2:98-  
 CR-00139, the Court sentenced McMiniment to three years of supervised release to run concurrently  
 with the three years of supervised release for 2:98-CR-00473.

22 <sup>2</sup> McMiniment pled to the following facts concerning  
 23 child support count in the Plea Agreement:

24 **WILLFUL FAILURE TO PAY CHILD SUPPORT**

25 From on or about June 1994 to in or about April 1998, Wayne Andre  
 26 McMiniment, who resided in Nevada while his minor child resided in another state,  
 failed to pay a past due child support obligation as ordered by the Superior Court of  
 California. This unpaid obligation has been overdue for more than one year and in  
 an amount greater than \$5,000.

1 paragraph 53 [of the Pre-Sentence Investigation Report], is, I think for  
2 all practical purposes, identical to the offense that is contained in the  
3 indictment that the Court referenced [the failure to pay child support  
4 charge, 2:98-CR-00139] when we started this afternoon.

5 As one can see from a review of paragraph 53, the sums due  
6 under the California order for support were evidently paid in full, and  
7 the amount that he currently owes, and that is the subject of the  
8 indictment before this Court, is the interest on the sum that had been  
9 due previously. So I don't think one can challenge the interrelatedness  
10 of the offense that is the subject of the indictment and the offense and  
11 conviction that is referenced in paragraph 53.

12 . . .

13 [The failure to pay child support count, as a gross misdemeanor,] really  
14 isn't subject to the sentencing guidelines. But I would point out that it  
15 is subject to the presentence report, it is subject to the disposition of  
16 this Court, and it is something for which he is going to be sentenced  
17 today. I do think it is a redundant charge that has resulted in an  
18 enhancement of his criminal history.

19 This – this single California misdemeanor felony for which he  
20 was on the most loosest of probations has resulted in 3 additional  
21 criminal history points. It results in the point in paragraph 53, and it  
22 results in the 2 points in paragraph 55. And one has to ask, he was on  
23 probation in California at the time the offenses referenced in the  
24 information were committed, and presumably at the time the  
25 referenced – the crime referenced in the indictment was committed, but  
26 one – if one looks at that one understands that the amount that was at

1 issue in California was at some point in time paid in full. His failure to  
2 pay his support was paid in full and California was continuing to – to  
3 supervise him, continuing to demand something from him which was  
4 interest.

5 Now, ordinarily interest is a civil concept. . . . I don't ordinarily  
6 see interest as being the subject of criminal prosecution, but that's  
7 what's happened here. And that failure to pay interest has resulted, in  
8 my opinion, in 3 additional criminal history points. And that . . .  
9 moves [McMiniment] from Criminal History II to III. And, perhaps,  
10 from II to III to I, because if he only had 1 criminal history point he  
11 would be a Category I criminal history defendant.

12 (Opp'n, Att. A at 8-10.) The Court agreed that the federal charge was "not predicated  
13 directly as part of the original failure to pay, but is a consequence of failure to pay interest  
14 based upon that earlier amount." (Id. at 13.) Nonetheless, the Court found that although  
15 "[t]here is a nexus undeniably between the two . . . that nexus [does not] merge[] the  
16 offenses to the point that [the federal charge] is not a distinct criminal offense." (Id. at 13-  
17 14.) Accordingly, the Court found it appropriate to apply "the 1 point at paragraph 53  
18 under 4A.1©, and, . . . 2 points at paragraph 55 at 4A1.1(d) . . . and, therefore, the Criminal  
19 History Category is a Category III[.]" (Id. at 14.)

20 On May 24, 2005, McMiniment returned to California Superior Court to request  
21 modification of his child support obligations. (Mot. to Vacate, Ex. 1 at 4.) At the hearing  
22 on the modification, the California Superior Court stated:

23 In [McMiniment's] declaration he said that he had been given  
24 conflicting information and conflicting accountings over the years.  
25 And if that's true, it makes it impossible to know the exact amount to  
26 pay. Therefore, the action of the County in providing the conflicting

1 information, which is a Catch 22 that he can never pay the amount  
2 owed, at least it should estoppel the collection on any interest on the  
3 sum.

4  
5 (Id. at 8-9.) The California Superior Court ordered that the county was estopped from  
6 collecting interest on the principal amount of the child support McMiniment owed, and that  
7 from May of 1988 to May 24, 2005, McMiniment owes zero arrears for child support.  
8 (Mot. to Vacate, Ex. 2 ¶ 23.)

9 McMiniment now requests this Court to vacate his child support conviction,  
10 vacate the restitution order for the child support charge, and dismiss the child support  
11 charge. Additionally, McMiniment requests the Court to vacate the restitution order for the  
12 wire fraud charges and to hold a new hearing regarding the appropriate restitution for the  
13 wire fraud charges.

## 14 II. DISCUSSION

15 McMiniment first asserts that he is within the one-year period of limitations  
16 under § 2255 because the California Superior Court modification constitutes new facts that  
17 he could not have discovered previously through the exercise of due diligence.  
18 McMiniment argues that the Court should vacate the willful failure to pay child support  
19 charges because the California Superior Court has held that McMiniment did not owe  
20 interest on his child support arrearage and the federal charge in 2:98-CR-00139 was based  
21 on his failure to pay interest on the arrearage. McMiniment also argues that the Court  
22 improperly determined that his criminal history category for the sentence in the wire fraud  
23 case, 2:98-CR-00473, was a category III instead of a category I because the additional three  
24 criminal history points resulted from the child support convictions. Finally, McMiniment  
25 argues that he received ineffective assistance of counsel because (1) counsel did not  
26 investigate the California conviction and improperly advised him to plead guilty to a federal

1 offense that he did not commit; and (2) the Court's restitution order for the wire fraud  
2 charges was based on a new law passed after McMiniment committed the acts which led to  
3 his conviction to which counsel did not object.

4 The Government opposes the motion, arguing that the period of limitations bars  
5 McMiniment from bringing the motion to vacate and that the California modification does  
6 not constitute recently discovered facts that would support his claims. Additionally, the  
7 Government argues that McMiniment has not demonstrated that he received ineffective  
8 assistance of counsel.

9 **A. Period of Limitations**

10 McMiniment argues that his motion is not barred under 28 U.S.C. § 2255 because  
11 he did not discover the facts supporting his claim until May 24, 2005, and he filed his  
12 motion within one year of that date. The Government counters that McMiniment knew the  
13 facts contained in the California modification at the time of his sentencing as argued by his  
14 attorney and therefore the applicable period of limitations is one year from the date of his  
15 sentence. The Government also argues that McMiniment's ineffective assistance of counsel  
16 claim for the wire fraud charges, is unrelated to the California modification and therefore  
17 the period of limitation for that claim began to run on the date of sentencing.

18 Title 28 U.S.C. § 2255 provides:

19 A 1-year period of limitation shall apply to a motion under this section.

20 The limitation period shall run from the latest of –

- 21 (1) the date on which the judgment of conviction  
22 becomes final;  
23 (2) the date on which the impediment to making a motion  
24 created by governmental action in violation of the  
25 Constitution or laws of the United States is removed, if  
26 the movant was prevented from making a motion by such

governmental action;

(3) the date on which the right asserted was initially recognized by the Supreme Court, if that right has been newly recognized by the Supreme Court and made retroactively applicable to cases on collateral review; or

(4) the date on which the facts supporting the claim or claims presented could have been discovered through the exercise of due diligence.

A defendant must motion for relief under § 2255 within one year of final judgment or fall within one of the three exceptions. Regarding second or successive motions, 28 U.S.C. § 2255 provides:

A second or successive motion must be certified as provided in section 2244 by a panel of the appropriate court of appeals to contain—

(1) newly discovered evidence that, if proven and viewed in light of the evidence as a whole, would be sufficient to establish by clear and convincing evidence that no reasonable fact finder would have found the movant guilty of the offense; or

(2) a new rule of constitutional law, made retroactive to cases on collateral review by the Supreme Court, that was previously unavailable.

Therefore, § 2255 provides a mechanism for defendants who assert newly discovered evidence supports their claim to file a second or successive petition.

#### 1. Wire Fraud Restitution

McMiniment is time-barred from bringing his ineffective assistance counsel of claim for the wire fraud restitution. The judgment of conviction became final on January

1 20, 2000. McMiniment did not bring his wire fraud restitution claim until March 10, 2006,  
2 over six years after final judgment. Although McMiniment argues that the period of  
3 limitation should run from the date of the California modification, the California  
4 modification is unrelated to restitution for the wire fraud charges and therefore does not  
5 support the claim. Additionally, McMiniment cites no authority to support his argument  
6 that the Court should nonetheless allow him to bring the claim as bringing the claim earlier  
7 would have risked a successive motion. Further, as outlined above, McMiniment could  
8 have brought his wire fraud restitution claim within the period of limitations and upon  
9 obtaining the California modification, he could have petitioned to file a second or  
10 successive motion. Accordingly, McMiniment's claim for ineffective assistance of counsel  
11 as to his wire fraud charges falls outside the one year period of limitations and McMiniment  
12 is therefore barred from asserting the claim now.

## 13 2. Claims Relating to Failure to Pay Child Support

14 McMiniment is not time barred from bringing his claims relating to the failure to  
15 pay child support. Even though McMiniment asserted at the time of sentencing that he had  
16 paid the principal amount in the arrears in full, the documentation from the State of  
17 California stated he was \$35,216.00 in arrears. (Pre-Sentence Investigation Report ¶ 30.)  
18 At the time of sentencing, McMiniment had no way of disputing the arrearage except  
19 through his own statements. The California modification of McMiniment's child support  
20 obligations did not occur until May 24, 2005. McMiniment filed his Motion to Vacate on  
21 March 10, 2006, within a year from the date McMiniment through the exercise of due  
22 diligence "discovered" facts that would support his claim, specifically, the Superior Court  
23 of California's modification order. Thus, McMiniment's claims that the Court improperly  
24 assigned him a Category III criminal history, that he was factually innocent of the child  
25 support charges, that the Court should vacate the restitution for the child support charge,  
26 and that his counsel provided ineffective assistance when counsel advised him to plead



1 guilty to the child support charge fall within the one-year period of limitations and are not  
2 time-barred.

### 3 **B. Habeas Relief**

#### 4 1. Conviction

##### 5 a. Actual Innocence

6 McMiniment argues “clearly McMiniment’s conviction for the child support  
7 count is subject to collateral attack as a result of the Superior Court in Orange County  
8 finding that the obligation which he was allegedly failing to pay was really not an obligation  
9 at all.” (Mot. to Vacate at 5.) The Government counters that the Court should not vacate  
10 the child support conviction because McMiniment was aware of the facts and still chose to  
11 plead guilty. Furthermore, the Government argues that all the California court did was to  
12 estop the state from collecting further child support payments from McMiniment because  
13 “of an accounting failure or lack of proof.” (Opp’n at 4.)<sup>3</sup>

14 Normally, “a voluntary and intelligent plea of guilty made by an accused person,  
15 who has been advised by competent counsel, may not be collaterally attacked.” Bousley v.  
16 United States, 523 U.S. 614, 621 (1998) (quoting Mabry v. Johnson, 467 U.S. 504, 508  
17 (1984)). Nonetheless, “[w]here a defendant has procedurally defaulted a claim by failing to  
18 raise it on direct review, the claim may be raised in habeas only if the defendant can first  
19 demonstrate either cause and actual prejudice, or that he is actually innocent.” Id. at 622  
20 (internal quotation omitted). “To establish actual innocence, petitioner must demonstrate  
21 that, in light of all the evidence, it is more likely than not that no reasonable juror would  
22 have convicted him.” Id. at 623 (quotations omitted).

23 There is nothing in the California court’s modification order (Mot. to Vacate,  
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25 <sup>3</sup> This is the extent of the parties’ arguments on actual innocence. McMiniment did  
26 not argue this point in a separate section or address it separately.

1 Ex. 2) or in the transcript for the modification hearing (Mot. to Vacate, Ex. 1) that  
2 demonstrates McMiniment was not in arrears on his child support payment and was  
3 factually innocent of the federal charge for failure to pay child support. The modification  
4 hearing did result in the California Court finding that, in May of 2005, McMiniment was in  
5 zero arrears and that the state was estopped from collecting further interest. However, there  
6 are indications in the transcript of the modification hearing that McMiniment was in arrears  
7 on his child support payments or at least failed to pay on the interest prior to May of 2005.  
8 For instance on May 11, 2005, McMiniment made a payment of \$927.15. (Id. at 12.)  
9 McMiniment also made a payment of \$1,126.70 in December of 2004. (Id. at 11.) The fact  
10 that McMiniment still was making payments on his child support in 2004 and 2005, implies  
11 that he still was in arrears on his child support payments. Additionally, McMiniment made  
12 a \$6,008 child support payment in July of 1996, which was during the period contained in  
13 the federal charge. (Id. at 7.) Furthermore, the California Superior Court did not credit  
14 McMiniment with the amount of the payments or order the county to reimburse him for the  
15 payments. (Id. at 14.) This indicates that McMiniment did owe the money and that the  
16 California Superior Court's decision was based on "accounting failure or lack of proof."  
17 Accordingly, McMiniment has not demonstrated actual innocence.

18 b. Ineffective Assistance of Counsel

19 McMiniment argues that his counsel was ineffective for failing to investigate the  
20 California child support case and for advising McMiniment to plead guilty to the federal  
21 failure to pay child support charge because had counsel investigated, he would have  
22 determined that "in all likelihood McMiniment was going to prevail on his claim that the  
23 amount California claimed he owed could not be proven." (Mot. to Vacate at 7.)  
24 McMiniment also argues that counsel told him to plead guilty because the misdemeanor  
25 case would have no effect on his sentence. The Government argues that counsel provided  
26 adequate representation given the seriousness of the charges McMiniment was facing,

1 counsel did discuss the California child support charges at sentencing, counsel negotiated  
2 for a two-level downward departure, and counsel argued for and obtained a ruling that the  
3 supervised release for the child support charge run concurrently with the supervised release  
4 for the wire fraud charges.

5 To constitute ineffective assistance, counsel's performance must fall "below an  
6 objective standard of reasonableness" and petitioner must demonstrate "there is a  
7 reasonable probability that, but for counsel's unprofessional errors, [the petitioner] would  
8 have prevailed . . . ." Cockett v. Ray, 333 F.3d 938, 944 (9th Cir. 2003) (quoting Miller v.  
9 Keeney, 882 F.2d 1428, 1434 (9th Cir. 1989)) (other citations omitted).

10 The record before the Court, however, does not support McMiniment's claim that  
11 his sentencing counsel's performance fell below an objective standard of reasonableness.  
12 Neither has McMiniment demonstrated that he would have prevailed but for errors on the  
13 part of sentencing counsel.

## 14 2. Sentence

15 McMiniment argues that the California modification demonstrates that he was  
16 current in his child support payments at the time of sentencing and that he would not have  
17 been on probation if Orange County had not been in error regarding the amount of money  
18 McMiniment owed in past due child support. McMiniment also argues that his prior  
19 conviction in California would have been vacated if Orange County had computed correctly  
20 his child support. As a result, McMiniment argues that this Court should remove the three  
21 additional criminal history points that were used to determine McMiniment's Criminal  
22 History Category for the wire fraud charges. The Government counters that the Court  
23 should not remove the three points from McMiniment's criminal history because the  
24 California conviction still stands and there is no question that McMiniment was on  
25 probation at the time of the sentence.

26 In United States v. Guthrie, the United States Court of Appeals held that "[w]hen

1 a state court vacates a defendant's prior state conviction, the sentence resulting from that  
2 conviction may not influence the defendant's criminal history score under the [Federal  
3 Sentencing] Guideline." United States v. Guthrie, 931 F.2d 564, 572 (9th Cir. 1991).  
4 (citing U.S.S.G. § 4A1.2, App. n.6 (1991)). Furthermore, if the state court does not vacate  
5 the sentence until after the district court imposes sentence, the district court must revisit the  
6 sentence and subtract the additional criminal history points based on the state conviction.  
7 Id. 572-73.

8           McMiniment has not demonstrated that this Court erroneously imposed the three  
9 additional criminal history points. As discussed above, there is nothing in the Modification  
10 Oder or the Reporter's Transcript that indicates McMiniment was not in arrears during the  
11 period from 1996 to 1998. There is no evidence that McMiniment's California conviction  
12 has been vacated. Nor is there evidence that McMiniment was not on probation during the  
13 period from 1996 to 1998. Rather the Reporter's Transcript of the modification hearing  
14 indicates McMiniment was on probation in 1996 at least. (See Mot. to Vacate, Ex. 1 at 7.)  
15 Accordingly, the Court did not err when it used McMiniment's prior California conviction  
16 and probation to assign three additional criminal history points.

### 17                   3. Restitution

18           McMiniment argues because the California Modification Order found he was in  
19 zero arrears, this Court should vacate the sentence regarding restitution for the child support  
20 charge. Additionally, McMiniment argues "given that McMiniment paid toward the  
21 restitution during the term of his supervised release, he is entitled to an accounting for the  
22 payments, including where the payments were sent and a determination as to whether or not  
23 the payments should be returned to him." (Mot. to Vacate at 8.) The Government does not  
24 respond specifically to this argument.

25           As discussed above, McMiniment's characterization of the California  
26 Modification Order as essentially finding that McMiniment was never in arrears in his child

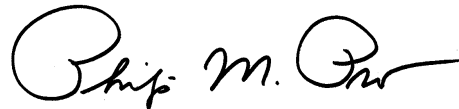
1 support payments is inaccurate. The California Modification Order merely demonstrates  
2 that in May of 2005, McMiniment was no longer required to pay any money for child  
3 support. There is nothing in the Order or in the transcript that indicates McMiniment did  
4 not owe the money from 1996 to 1998.

5 Nevertheless, at the hearing conducted on March 1, 2007, it became apparent that  
6 McMiniment has continued to make restitution payments with regard to the failure to pay  
7 child support conviction and that the Clerk of Court currently holds the sum of \$14,022.96  
8 in its account for that purpose. As that sum is not properly obligated to child support, the  
9 Court concludes that those restitution monies held by the Clerk of Court should be allocated  
10 to Defendant's restitution obligation in the wire fraud case which carries an outstanding  
11 balance due of \$2,024,105.86.

12 IT IS THEREFORE ORDERED that Defendant, Wayne Andre McMiniment's  
13 Motion Pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 2255 to Vacate, Set Aside, or Correct Sentence by a Person  
14 in Federal Custody (Doc.#41) is hereby Denied.

15 IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that the Clerk of Court shall forthwith allocate all  
16 sums received as restitution payments from Defendant, Wayne Andre McMiniment to the  
17 outstanding restitution balance due in case number 2:98-cr-00473-PMP.

18 DATED: March 12, 2007.

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21 PHILIP M. PRO  
22 United States District Judge  
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